

TOWN OF HIGHGATE

Selectboard Mtg.

June 2, 2016 @ 7pm

Approved Minutes

NOTE: All actions taken are unanimous unless otherwise stated.

A. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order by Chair Chris Yates @ 7:00pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Highgate Selectboard Members – Chris Yates, Chair; Paulette Tatro, Vice-Chair; Josh LaRocque; Sharon Bousquet; *absent* – *Randy Connelly*

Highgate Office Staff – Wendi Dusablon, Town Clerk; Heidi Britch-Valenta, Town Administrator; Shelley Laroche, Town Treasurer

Public / Other – Richard Wilkens; John Patnode; Melissa Patnode; Carlton LaFrance; Don Gilbert; Sarah Chevalier; Eric Chevalier; Alice (Sue) Cota; Jean Chevalier; Daniel Nadeau; Andy King; Bonnie Tinker; James Tinker; Lori Olds; Michelle & Brian Douglas; Janice Smith; Eric Bessette; George Greenwood; Kellie Uzell; Donald Bessette; Karen St. Lawrence; Sandra Stone; Skyler Messier; David Desorcie; Rachel Lamoureux (County Courier)

B. Public Comment

Carlton LaFrance stated that AmCare recently picked him up at his home on Route 78 and said it took them a while to get to his house. On route to the hospital they pulled over to work on him and he was not happy with that, he wanted to get straight to the hospital. He also asked why the board was not making the AmCare contract public. Mr. LaFrance was informed that the contract is a public document and anyone can see it. Michelle Douglas expressed concern about the change to AmCare. She currently is 10-15 minutes out from MVR and stated with AmCare it will be more like 30-45 minutes to reach her home. She asked the board what they could tell her to assure her the response times will not be that long. Chris answered that he is hopeful AmCare will build a facility in Highgate. She did not want to hear that he was hopeful, she wanted to hear facts because the time difference scares her. Brian Douglas, a Rollo Road resident, asked if AmCare demonstrated to the board that they had an intimate knowledge of our area and the lingo of the different areas of Highgate. He heard, admittedly third handed, that AmCare did not know where the four corners of Shawville was. This is of great concern to him. He also stated that given the fact that he might not always have control of who calls for assistance should he need it, if the call comes in to 911 that they are needed on “the horn”, would AmCare even know where that was? Brian asked if during the discussions of money, service and response times if that was discussed as well. Chris responded that it all starts internally with E911 mapping with our listers and the calls are also guided by phone coordinates which are computer guided to our homes. The questions were asked of AmCare, and those were the answers, and those answers were accepted. Brian asked if AmCare was going to spend time with our businesses and residents looking at maps and learning our town. Bonnie Tinker expressed disappointment with the decision to change services and said it should have been voted on. Kellie Uzell asked Paulette a question about her letter that was submitted last meeting when she could not be present. Paulette had stated in her letter that AmCare having six ambulances was one of the reasons she voted for AmCare. Kellie pointed out that two of those ambulances are only for transports, leaving four ambulances to cover multiple towns. Paulette responded that when MVR’s ambulance is unavailable, AmCare responds as back up. There was some discussion as to whether MVR has one or two ambulances available. Kellie stated there are two available every day. Heidi pointed out that Mr. LaFrance referenced a recent time when AmCare came to his aid, showing that AmCare does serve as back up currently. Lori Olds referenced a recent call regarding an unresponsive male in Sheldon and AmCare had to call the C-crew in from St. Albans. Lori clarified that C-crew is like MVR’s unit #2. Sandy Stone commented that Wendi and the town highway crew do a great job. She had some comments unrelated to ambulances. She would like to see guard rails considered for a few locations in town that are dangerous. She listed the locations as 1) intersection of Campagna Road and St. Armand Road at the “Y” 2) St.

Armand Road and Parent Road on the curve and 3) end of Rollo Road where it meets St. Armand Road. Chris commented that we have learned recently that guard rails can be somewhat controversial, based on another recent installation. Sandy will put these suggestions in writing and get them to Andy for further consideration and discussion. Eric Bessette asked Chris and Paulette if they plan to run for Selectboard when their terms are up in March. Chris answered no, and Paulette had not yet answered when Eric continued. He expressed frustration that this has 1) riled up the town 2) (expletive) ticked people off and 3) that they got what they wanted. He wanted answers as to what will happen when MVR is no longer in service after three years and AmCare jacks up their prices and we have no other choice or no other backup. Chris reminded Mr. Bessette that there are people who feel strongly about this issue on both sides and that the decision was made based on what is best for the *majority* of the town. Chris does agree that this town needs to move towards a different way of voting. This past March at town meeting we had 151 people vote on a school budget and 92 people stayed later to vote on town issues from the floor. Chris pointed out that we can't tell if the people in the chairs at town meeting are town residents or registered voters, it is an honor system, unless we go to a paper ballot. In 2015 there was a warned article, article #7, to change to Australian ballot voting. There was a motion, a second, and then it was immediately tabled and there was no discussion whatsoever. Take those floor vote numbers and compare them to the 698 people that voted on the ballot for our town clerk this past March. We need to look at this very strongly because there is large difference in the numbers of who is coming through to vote on the ballot but does not have the opportunity to vote on everything. To change the way we vote needs to be voted on from the floor, as that is how we currently vote public questions and budgets. Richard Wilkens has been following this issue and has lived in Highgate for four years. He can feel the strong emotion on either side of the issue. He is not discounting anyone's stories, but hasn't seen any documentary evidence that response times are more or less. He asked if the town looked at documentary evidence regarding response times as part of their decision. Yes, they did, and Chris has MVR response times from the last two months available to hand out for people to look at. These came directly from central dispatch. The data we have for AmCare is very limited, as they are mutual aid and they just opened their location in Sheldon. Mr. Wilkens asked if the MVR documentation is all it's reported to be – short response times all the time. He does not have a dog in this fight, noting that persuasion and production are what you need to change something in a town. He has also seen many personal attacks and feels that just isn't necessary. He doesn't know anyone here or anyone on the board, adding that any decision a board makes, there will always be people that don't like it. Mr. Wilkens also pointed out that potentially this may not have all been done the right way, but other than personal experiences, he doesn't see any factual documentation to match up to what people are saying. Jean Chevalier pointed out that in the moderator handbook it does state that everyone should be checked in at town meeting and town residents should be separated from non-residents for clarity on who can vote. Skyler Messier asked Chris if he wanted to see her write up tonight or read it in the paper tomorrow. Chris will read it tomorrow because we need to move on tonight. Eric Bessette feels his question from earlier was not answered, and further stated that the issue isn't MVR vs. AmCare, it's about responses times.

C. Monument Cleaning – John St. Denis

Mr. St. Denis was not present, but has spoken with Heidi, Chris and Charlie Nye. He is willing to work with Andy to show him his work and what he can provide for the town to clean the monument. He uses MAAS metal polish and he has a pressure washer if we want him to wash it as well. His concern is the metal plaque portion of the monument. Mr. St. Denis is local, but all the work he has previously done is not in this area. Josh was curious what his interest was in our area. Mr. St. Denis's granddaughter is doing a study for her master's program connected to the Saxe Monument so he wanted it cleaned for the photos. Motion by Chris Yates to authorize Andy King to work with John St. Denis on doing a test clean on the Saxe Monument prior to doing a full cleaning. The motion was seconded by Sharon Bousquet – **APPROVED.**

D. Representative Update – Steve Beyor

Mr. Beyor was not present for this update.

E. Town Treasurer – Shelley Laroche

1. Check warrants

Paulette had questions about different invoice for McCuins. Shelley clarified they were for flags and poles for Memorial Day, an oil change for the mower and expenses related to the fence at the library. Sharon asked if because the fire department and highway department use services from Charlebois where she works, if she should not sign the warrants. Sharon is not an owner and has no personal interest and the checks are made out to Charlebois, so Shelley believes it is fine for her to sign, there is no conflict of interest. Shelley also wanted to make a decision on the contract for the town reports. Repro came in at a lower price than the Newport Correctional Facility, and she never heard back from the company in Barre. She likes working with Repro and the quality of the books is good. The Newport facility would have to staple the books together to get the pricing down. Repro is convenient and good to work with. Motion by Chris Yates to authorize Town Treasurer, Shelley Laroche, to sign a contract with Repro Graphics for 2016 and 2017 town reports at a cost of \$1,670.00 per year for 500 town reports per year. The motion was seconded by Sharon Bousquet – **APPROVED**. It was noted we also get a digital pdf of the report as part of this cost which we use to post on the website and print any additional books if necessary or email to people. Heidi added that she has spoken to Wendi about adding a box on the tear off portion of the bill for people to check if they want a town report mailed to their home. We also need to add that post marks will no longer be accepted.

2. Audit contract

Everyone has now had a chance to look through the contract. Motion by Paulette Tatro to accept and sign the Sullivan and Powers audit contract. The motion was seconded Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**.

F. Town Clerk – Wendi Dusablon

1. Minutes from May 19th

Paulette has already given Wendi a few edits, which have been done. Motion by Chris Yates to accept the minutes from May 19, 2016 as corrected. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**.

2. Dog registration update

To date we have licensed 759 dogs for 2016. We still have 100 +/- left to track down. It is always Wendi's goal to wrap this up prior to mailing out tax bills in August. Vonnie has been successful by getting on the phone with people and we are ahead of where we were last year at this time. Vonnie will be getting with Ben Lowell (Constable) to start knocking on doors and ticket if necessary.

3. Reappointment of Fire Warden

David Desorcie is present tonight and he would like to be reappointed as our Fire Warden. Chris asked if he can have an assistant Fire Warden. David said that would have to go through the state. Chris Uzell is a Lieutenant on the fire department and he attends meetings with David. Chris Uzell has the authority to issue permits. Chris Yates just wants the fire department to be proactive rather than reactive with regard to permits, communication and preventing brush fires. David will talk with Dan Dillner about getting more information on having an official assistant. Motion by Chris Yates to reappoint David Desorcie as the Vermont Town Forest Fire Warden for the Town of Highgate for a five year term, expiring on June 30, 2021. The motion was seconded by Sharon Bousquet – **APPROVED**.

G. Administrator Items – Heidi Britch-Valenta

1. ADA Study Amendment

We have an opportunity to amend our contract with the architect to also look at exploring using the highway side of the building as a possible spot for the library. This would be one more piece of info for the library to have regarding their relocation efforts. When it goes to the voters we will be able to show we have looked at many possibilities. Sharon would like to see the wording changed, she found it confusing, and Paulette agreed. We have grant funds to cover the amendment. Eric Chevalier asked why we would consider this if we don't have money to relocate the highway department. Don Bessette asked if the grant funding was just for the ADA study – yes, just the study. The architect will be at our next meeting to present the information he has put together to improve ADA accessibility here at the municipal building. Sharon had questions about any grant funds that we don't use – they go back to the

state and back into the pool. We are planning an open house in September to present the findings of the ADA study and CIP and feedback is encouraged and welcome. We will then be in a position to apply for funding to make the modifications. Mr. Scangas will be able to answer questions regarding the ADA study in more detail. Heidi noted that we have a small committee that is working on this project. The upstairs of this building has been vacant and used just for storage, but we could make it usable to the general public with modifications and accessibility. Motion by Chris Yates to authorize the Town Administrator to sign the ADA feasibility study amendment with the change in wording (removing \$1,200.00 hourly not to exceed and inserting not to exceed \$1,200.00 billed hourly). The motion was seconded by Paulette Tatro – **APPROVED.**

2. Fire Department floor RFP

There was a draft of the RFP in the Selectboard packets. Sharon felt uncomfortable with the section asking for resumes of employees. Because this project is on a smaller scale, that could be taken out, section 2B will be edited. Motion by Chris Yates to send out the RFP for the fire department floor with the correction in section 2B. The motion was seconded by Sharon Bousquet – **APPROVED.** Paulette noted that there are blank fields for the site visit date and reply date. Andy and a representative from the fire department should be present for the site visit. The scope of dates will be; site visit in about two weeks and proposals due two weeks from then.

3. Proposed zoning fee schedule changes

This was amended in 2014 and we have some additions for things we have been doing but that are not documented. 1) no charge for permits for non-profit organizations 2) no charge for ADA access ramp permits 3) variances were never listed, cost is \$150.00, the same as a conditional use or site plan 4) letter of compliance \$30.00 never made the list 5) COAL certificate of approved location, by statute a town can charge a minimum of \$25.00, or should we make it \$30.00 like a letter of compliance? The board would like to keep the COALs at \$25.00. Motion by Chris Yates to amend the Town of Highgate zoning fees, public hearing and recording fees as stated. The motion was seconded by Sharon Bousquet – **APPROVED.**

4. Misc.

- Josh Aldrich will be running for State Rep – Franklin 5 and would like permission to use the municipal park for a campaign event. Chris read aloud from his request. Chris will respond to Mr. Aldrich asking him for a firm date and make sure he is responsible for cleanup and that there is no smoking or alcohol in the park.
- Ray's Auto submitted a Certificate of Approved Location (COAL) back in February. They have done quite a bit of clean up and installed a fence. Per their permit they are allowed to have up to twenty inspectable vehicles in front of the fence. They could be fined if they are in violation of their permit, but would have the opportunity to right the violation prior to being fined. There was a compounding issue there with regard to someone renting the house, adding to the congestion. And it was noted that the neighboring business makes it look like they have more on site than they do. The board will be signing the COAL for one year and sending it on our letterhead, as was recently done for the Machias. Motion by Chris Yates to sign the letter in response to the COAL for Ray's Used Auto & Salvage. The motion was seconded by Sharon Bousquet – **APPROVED.**
- Sharon made an apology regarding access to documents. She is having technical difficulties with her iPad and accessing the drop box application where all the documents are located. It was not Heidi's fault or anyone else's fault and no information is being withheld from Sharon that she has asked for.
- Sue Cota asked the board about a situation with Andy Leduc. He told her that he sued the town and won the lawsuit. Heidi clarified that the case involves an appeal of a decision by the Development Review Board, not the Selectboard, and has nothing to do with the Selectboard. There was a denial of a request so that case is still in court and a decision has not been made.

H. Arena Construction Committee – Phase II updates

1. Bleacher bids

Don Gilbert was present as well as Heidi, Josh, Wendi and Paulette – all members of the committee. They have narrowed the bleacher bids down to two proposals. They will also be moving ahead to apply for the NBRP grant to look at ventilation and possibly the entryway as well. The grant is a 50/50 match so the town would need to have a commitment up front and have the money in hand. It was noted that this is all coming from the arena fundraising account. Paulette gave a quick update on the account and what we have to work with. We have already committed to having the purlins painted this summer at a cost of \$24,000.00. Sharon asked about the roof. It is still pretty solid and the leaks have been addressed. They will continue to monitor loose screws. The bleacher options are \$55,000.00 or \$68,000.00, both through A+ Athletics. The difference is in the material and seat caps and the less expensive option is typically an outdoor bleacher. Both versions would be ADA compliant and have ramps. There was some discussion about the substructures. Ryan Maskell was not present but did send some comments. He would like to see ventilation work done before bleachers. We also have the opportunity to apply for a \$25,000.00 grant through the State of Vermont BGS, as we did before and used it for electrical work. Josh reiterated the importance of the ventilation work in the arena. All the locker rooms have no fresh air and no exhaust, so in the summer the inside of the building sweats a lot. The committee wondered if MAHA could contribute. Josh noted that MAHA has other projects planned to replace the tin on the gable ends and improve lighting over the ice surface and bleacher area. They also have \$6,000.00 tied up in zamboni repairs for this year. Heidi noted we have another \$7,500.00 coming in that was a commitment from RL Vallee. Don Bessette thinks these are good projects and might be worth putting before the voters. Richard Wilkens joined the conversation running some rough numbers. The NBRP grant is highly competitive but worth applying for, we have a good case and great projects to use it for. Heidi stated that big grants like this are slow wheels to turn. It was decided to support applying for all the grants and pushing the projects out another year to be able to do everything on our list. Sue Cota spends a lot of time at the rink and thinks the bleacher project is a great idea. ADA accessibility will give more people an opportunity to enjoy the events offered there and encourage more community support. Sue also commented that our rink looks great and our town should be very proud. Heidi added that an RFP was put out for the ventilation work and no formal bids were received by the deadline. Josh did get some rough numbers from VHV for us to work with. It is estimated that the ventilation work will cost us \$140,000.00 and the bleachers will cost us \$71,000.00. If we are successful with the grants we could potentially also fix the entryway, approximated at \$51,000.00. Sue Cota reminded everyone that bottles and cans can be dropped off at the Swanton Sunoco to benefit MAHA and the bottle drop at the arena is also a good option. Wendi will post something on the website and FB page to remind people of this. There was some discussion on the dehumidification system and the issues with that. The proposed fix is projected to cost \$10,000.00. Josh questions why we should have to pay anything, when VHV provided the specs on the project, knowing the temperature conditions there, so why do we have to pay to modify anything? The burden we are taking on is the added utility costs for the coil to run all winter long. We purchased the system to be efficient and that throws any efficiency right out the window. Paulette agrees with Josh on these points. Sarah Chevalier thinks it should all be put in writing to come to a resolution and see what sticks. Chris wants to ask them what system they would put in our arena today if we did not have one at all. The building belongs to the town, so any letter sent should be drafted jointly between the town and MAHA. Josh would like VHV to attend an arena construction committee meeting and take it from there. To conclude the discussion it was decided that we will apply for the NBRP grant and will go with A+ Athletics wrap around bleachers and ventilation work for 2017 projects. The purlins project will take place this summer, after July 1st. Volunteers will be needed to take out the turf and MAHA is looking for space to store the rolls of turf. It was further noted that turf rental went very well this year.

2. NBRP grant

As noted above, Heidi will be applying for this for the ventilation work, bleachers and possibly the entry way project at the arena for 2017. Grant awards will be announced in the early fall 2016.

I. Selectboard items

1. MAHA lease

The only change since the last meeting was adding the date of July 1st for any insurance increases to be assessed. Chris brought up the well testing which is an additional \$600.00 annually. MAHA hockey board and MAHA facilities board have all seen the lease. This is a three year agreement, which gives MAHA some planning room. Paulette asked about section 6.03 and rewording that section to take out the word *Highgate* and put in *recreational programming at the facility*. The amount of the lease is now \$12,600.00 per year, or \$1,050.00 per month. Heidi has made these edits so it can be signed tonight. Motion by Chris Yates to sign the Highgate Sports Arena lease with MAHA for three years. Josh LaRocque recused himself from the vote, as he is on the MAHA facilities board. The motion was seconded by Paulette Tatro – **APPROVED**. This new lease will be effective July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2019. Don Gilbert mentioned that he has someone to look at converting the appliances at the arena over to natural gas and he will ask them to provide some pricing.

2. I-89 upgrade letter of support

Motion by Josh LaRocque to sign the letter of support for the State of Vermont AOT Intelligent Transportation Systems. The motion was seconded by Sharon Bousquet – **APPROVED**. This is with regard to improving safety, efficiency, performance, reliability and economic viability of the I-89 corridor.

3. Misc.

- Heidi will work on the MOU for the cell tower. Adding more carriers to our tower will mean more revenue for the town and increased coverage for residents. The carriers need to hear from their customers that we want them added to our tower and we need increased coverage in the greater Highgate Center area. Wendi will post something on the website and FB to get people calling their carriers and spread the word about our tower.
- Lister update – in executive session earlier this evening, the board met with Shirley Fecteau, lister, regarding the future of her position here. As of June 10th she will need to resign her position here, due to her no longer being a resident of Highgate. Wendi and Shirley have reached out to VLCT as well as the State of Vermont and found that we can hire Shirley and keep her on as an assessor, on an annual basis. Shirley has submitted a letter of resignation as well as a letter of interest. Richard Wilkens had some questions about lister vs. assessor. It was noted that we have had little interest in lister positions and filling them every year at town meeting. Shirley has also submitted some data regarding hours and an hourly rate with regard to the assessor position. Motion by Chris Yates to accept Shirley Fecteau's resignation as a lister effective June 10, 2016. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**. Motion by Chris Yates to appoint Shirley Fecteau as an assessor for the Town of Highgate effective June 10, 2016 until town meeting day in March, 2017, for an average of two 7-hour days per week depending on the work load. The hourly rate will be \$15.00 per hour until July 1, 2016 and \$16.00 per hour after July 1, 2016. The motion was seconded by Paulette Tatro – **APPROVED**. It was noted that the listers office pay scale was being raised on July 1st anyway, so these rates are in line with what was already budgeted. Paulette stated that we are able to keep a valued person with all her knowledge and that she is willing to do it. We are very fortunate that it worked out this way. Shirley has expressed interest in staying on board past March, and if someone were to run as a lister this gives her an end date. Shirley is willing to stay on and train anyone that were to be elected.
- Memorial Day – Josh said the BBQ and parade all went well and that the weather was fabulous and the chicken was good! Jean Chevalier asked about a potential new sound system for use in the future.

4. Public Works Dept. updates

Andy provided an update for the packets, but was not present for this part of the meeting. He will need to rent an excavator for ditching projects, Andy recommends Milton Rental at \$1,100.00 per week. It will be able to be trailered by our F550 with a trailer from Drummac. The grader needs straight carbide blades. He recommends purchasing from Clark's for \$2,100.00, life expectancy of the blades is two to three years or longer. Sharon asked if these were in the budget – yes, they are. The 2016 International 7400 has scratches in the windshield wiper path. Navistar has refused to cover this under

warranty. Clark's has agreed to pay half the cost. This could wait until next fiscal year if needed. Paulette asked about budgeting for all items, all are covered in the budget. Josh asked how long we will rent the excavator – one week. We need to order bollards to protect the electrical service on the corner at the arena. This needs to be done and installed before paving can be done. Motion by Chris Yates to purchase four bollards to protect the electrical service at the arena for a total of \$1,380.00 for all four. The funds are to come from the phase #1 arena project. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**. Paulette wants it to be clearly noted that these funds are from phase I, so Shelley can book it correctly. Paulette had some questions about culverts and if the numbers are skewed because we are waiting on some grant funding. Shelley will have to clarify that. Josh had some questions about the grader blade, so the board called Andy and got him on speaker phone to clarify. Andy stated the logic behind the straight blade is as you move through summer when the base hardens up, the straight blade will not tear into the base too much. We currently have steel blades and they are shot. Andy also said the excavator is a 12,000 lb. machine, the largest they can get and still tow it with the F550. Andy also verified that funds for these items are in the budget. The windshield issue can wait. Clark's has agreed to pay half (\$528.72) because our trucks are all rinsed, cleaned and maintained all winter, so they know that is not the issue. Sharon would like to see us get local quotes as well. Andy added that this is a heated windshield. Motion by Chris Yates to rent the excavator from Milton Rental for one week at a cost of \$1,100.00. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**. Motion by Chris Yates to purchase a set of dual carbide grader blades from Clarks at a cost of \$2,100.00. The motion was seconded by Paulette Tatro – **APPROVED**. For comparison purposes it was noted that the quote from Nortrax was \$2,866.00.

J. Upcoming events

June 6	3pm	Finance Comm. Mtg.
June 7	6pm	Parks & Rec. Mtg. @ arena
June 9	6pm	DRB Mtg.
June 16	7pm	Selectboard Mtg.
June 21	6pm	Planning Comm. Mtg.
July 4		OFFICES CLOSED
July 7	7pm	Selectboard Mtg. – AOT presentation & Sheriffs update
Sept. 20		OPEN HOUSE – info to follow ☺

K. Executive session

Motion by Chris Yates for the Selectboard and Town Administrator to enter into executive session @ 9:33pm to discuss real estate and personnel issues where premature general public knowledge could place the town and the individuals involved at a substantial disadvantage. The motion was seconded by Paulette Tatro – **APPROVED**.

Motion by Chris Yates to exit executive session @ 10:16pm. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**.

L. Adjournment

Motion by Chris Yates to adjourn the meeting @ 10:17pm. The motion was seconded by Josh LaRocque – **APPROVED**.

Respectfully submitted by,

_____ Wendi Dusablon, Highgate Town Clerk

Minutes approved by,

_____ Christopher Yates, Chair – Highgate Selectboard